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# homemakers' chat

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U. S. DEPARTMENT  
OF AGRICULTURE

Wednesday, January 27, 1943.

Subject: "THE WARTIME FARM HOME." Information from the Extension Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture.

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The wartime farm home is a changed place. Son, brothers, and sometimes husbands are gone to the armed forces or to defense jobs. Daughters are often gone, too. Alarm clocks go off earlier in the morning, and lights are out later at night. Women wear overalls as well as gingham. Children hurry home from school to do the chores and help get the work done. More than ever before, it's a job for the whole family, with all the members working together as a team. There's a bigger food production job to do with less help, less equipment, and less transportation.

And the war has brought up a thousand and one additional obligations which change the home front: Bonds to buy, scrap to collect, less car-driving, growing a Victory garden, preserving more foods, sharing machinery, labor, and transportation with the neighbors, getting along without new furnishings and clothing, serving on neighborhood committees.

Farm women and girls occupy a large place in this picture. Extension workers, reporting from over 30 States to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, say that the number of women and girls doing farm chores and field work in 1942 was more than twice as many as in 1941. Three times as many girls and women operated power machinery in 1942 as in 1941. These women and girls are doubling and tripling their efforts to produce "food for freedom" in every part of the country....north....east....south....west.

But these outside demands on the farm homemakers' time bring up many special problems of management. One serious problem reported by the farm homemakers in many States is the care of the younger children. City women who work



can often find day nurseries nearby, where their little ones will be safe and happy in their absence. In fact, some defense plants provide nurseries and competent persons to run them for the mothers they employ.

But the farm woman generally lives too far from private nurseries to be able to use them. She has no time to take her child far from home, and now, with the gasoline and tire shortage, no car. She must combine her work in the fields or barnyard with an eye on her little children.

Some women belonging to a home demonstration club in Erie County, New York, solved this problem by starting to train high school girls to go into homes and help with the children. By making this a war enterprise and giving the trainees the privilege of wearing a uniform and special insignia to dignify their work, the girls were soon made to feel that this was a definite contribution to the war effort. The girls made their own uniforms, which were blue, similar to the uniform of a nurse's aide. The insignia CCA (Child Care Aide) was red.

A CCA can take the place of an older, stronger person, who can then spend time raising food on the farm. The training center outlines the girls' duties and sets their wages. When a farm woman replaces hired helpers in the fields, she must expect to pay satisfactory wages to replace herself in the house.

Other mothers who have not yet succeeded in getting helpers often have to take the children out with them into the fields and keep them out of mischief as best they can.

Another problem many hardworking farm women have encountered is keeping the house as clean as they would like to have it. If daylight hours are mostly spent out of doors, the homemaker has to content herself with any substitute help she can get, or clean less well, or skip over certain kinds of cleaning entirely





"for the duration." Most farm homemakers find they must take short cuts of every sort, and simplify the care of home furnishings by putting away all articles that are not in frequent use. Family teamwork can be developed so that no one makes any unnecessary dirt or disorder, and each takes the responsibility for putting back in place any articles that have been used. With good family cooperation some homemakers may find themselves relieved of work they always thought they had to do personally.

Other effects of the farm woman's working in the fields more than in the house show up in her having less time for preparing meals, less time for laundering the family clothes, and less time for canning and preserving. In some States the women report that they don't get enough chance to rest....they can't do as much baking as they used to....nor can they repair clothing, furniture or equipment that needs attention.

Of course, the farm homemakers who are making the best of these difficult conditions are using as many housekeeping short cuts as they can. Among those many have found helpful are: Having one-dish meals; exchanging labor and equipment with neighbors; assigning definite duties to each one from the oldest to the youngest; rearranging work centers for greater convenience and faster work; planning for better kitchen storage.

New York State has another plan for training young girls to help as wartime home assistants. The homemaker agrees to continue the training as a sort of internship for the girl who comes to relieve her.

Another way farm women are adjusting to their new kinds of work is in learning how to do the farm work in the easiest and safest way. Louisiana has conducted classes on how to care for and operate a tractor. Iowa has given instruction in the farm business for women who have to run their family farms in the absence of their husbands....how to lift heavy weights without injury. North Dakota teaches farm women to use the right size tool for various jobs. Extension workers in Minnesota, Arkansas, Louisiana, Texas, Arizona and Oregon have taught the women how to make suitable work clothes, for the sake of safety as well as comfort.

Generally speaking, the difficulty of combining outdoor and indoor work is being adjusted in thousands of farm homes, which are helping the nation to meet the enormous food production goals. When "food wins the war and writes the peace", these patriotic farm women and girls can feel justly proud of their wartime efforts.

